WAYNE

THE LAZY BIRD ANGEL

BY LORI RANDOLPH

Zen: Wayne, it’s time for you to report to the office for your assignment on Earth. Wayne, put down the comic book and get in here now.

Wayne: I'm coming, Zen — don’t get your panties in a wad. Geez.

Zen: I’ll pretend I didn’t hear that—get your butt down here now.

Wayne: Alright, alright—keep your halo on. I’m coming.

Zen: This is the last call—if you’re not down here, I’m sending Connie the Angel Cat to come get you.

Wayne: That goody two-shoes cat—okay, I'm here, happy now, geez. Why bother sending that do-gooder anyway?

Zen: She was getting people and animals to behave, but never mind—here's your assignment, Buster: Earth needs you.

Wayne: Why would he need me if I'm a bad influence? You want me to go to Earth and be a bad influence on a child? Wow, I really had it all figured out wrong.

Zen: Wayne, Earth needs someone the kid will actually listen to. Even if that someone is a mess.

Wayne: So let me get this straight… Earth needs me because I'm a mess?

He folds his wings, squints at Zen.

"What, am I supposed to teach the kid how NOT to be like me? That's… weirdly inspirational. And exhausting."

Zen: If that’s what it takes, yes.

Wayne: Oh great. I’m the “bad example” assignment.

“Fantastic. Let me just flap down there and ruin someone’s day for educational purposes.”

Zen: Wayne, you’re not ruining anything. You’re helping. In your own… chaotic way.

Wayne: So I’m the cautionary tale?

“Perfect. I always wanted to be a walking warning label.”

Wayne: Who in their right mind would send me to help a kid?

Zen: Personally, I wouldn't choose you — but the big guy upstairs sees something in you nobody else sees.

Wayne: Something in me? Like what, a disaster sign?

Zen: No. Zen folds his arms, looks at Wayne seriously. "He says you've got a hidden gotcha. Something buried deep. Something you don't even know you have."

Zen: Breaking news, Wayne. If you fail this assignment, you're going down there permanently. If you pass… you get angel-bird wings.

Zen: Breaking news, Wayne. If you fail this assignment, you're going down there permanently. If you pass… you get angel-bird wings.

Wayne: Angel-bird wings? Oh boy, here we go.

"Who in their right mind thought I needed wings? I can barely handle the ones I've got!"

Zen: This isn't a joke, Buster. Big guy upstairs signed off on it.

Wayne: So let me get this straight…

"If I mess up, I'm stuck on Earth forever — but if I somehow pull off a miracle, I get upgraded?"

Zen: Exactly. Hidden gotcha. He sees something in you.

Zen: Wayne. Not Earth… hell.

“If you fail, that’s where you’re going. If you pass, you get angel-bird wings.”

Wayne: HELL? Oh boy — that’s not a promotion, that’s a threat!

“Zen, who in their right mind sends me anywhere near hell? I’m allergic to fire, responsibility, and consequences!”

Zen: Big guy upstairs made the call. He said you needed… motivation.

Wayne: Motivation? That’s not motivation — that’s a flaming nightmare!

“I’m not built for heat. I’m built for naps and complaining!”

Zen: The catch is… you actually have to try.

“Kid’s a handful. Loud. Wild. Climbs everything. Talks nonstop.”

Wayne: Oh great. A hyper cloud-climber.

“Perfect match for me — I’m allergic to effort.”

Zen: You’re assigned to guide him. Keep him out of trouble. Teach him something useful.

Zen does NOT mention the invisible watcher.

Zen: I trust you. You'll do a good job.

Wayne: Trust? Me? Oh boy — that's a bold choice.

"Zen, I'm not exactly the poster bird for responsibility. I complain for a living."

Zen: And yet… you're the one he picked.

"Big guy upstairs doesn't make mistakes."

Wayne: Well he made one today!

“Zen, I’m a walking nap schedule with feathers. A kid is gonna run circles around me.”

Zen: You’ll manage. You always do.

Zen hands him the assignment scroll.

“Just go. And don’t overthink it.”

Wayne: Overthink? Zen, I underthink everything.

“Fine. I’ll go. But if this kid starts climbing clouds, I’m calling you.”

Wayne: This must be the place… oh geez.

He looks around.

“Magician boy? Oh boy, I got my work cut out for me.”

Does he know magic acts aren’t cool anymore?

“Great. I’m mentoring a kid who thinks he’s pulling rabbits out of clouds.”

Zen Voice: Wayne, be nice.

“He likes magic. It keeps him busy.”

Wayne: Busy? Zen, he’s gonna try to saw me in half.

“I’m not built for stage tricks. I’m built for naps.”

Buster: Who are you? What are you doing here?

Wayne: Look, kid… I don’t wanna be here much.

“You don’t want me here.”

Buster: But I do want you here.

Buster smiles, holding his magic cards.

Wayne: Geez… okay, okay.

“Cut the magic, will you? Don’t ask me to pick a card — I’m not falling for that tired trick.”

Buster: It’s not tired! It’s my best trick!

Wayne: Oh boy… your best trick?

“Kid, if that deck explodes into glitter, I’m flying straight back to Zen.”

Wayne: You must be Buster, kid.

Wayne squints at the deck of cards in Buster's hand.

"What's with the magic? You tryin' to get beat or something?"

And don't ask me to pick a card — I'm not stupid.

"I've seen that tired trick since clouds were invented."

Buster: It's not tired! It's my special trick!

Wayne: Oh boy… special?

"Kid, if that card turns into a rabbit, I'm flying back to Zen."

Buster: Okay… what do you mean “time”?

Wayne: I mean it’s time you drop the magic stuff, kid.

“You do a stand-up comedy routine. You insult people. You give lots of sarcasm. The audience loves it.”

Wayne: What’s with the magic, kid?

“You wanna get beat or something? Nobody’s impressed by a deck of cards.”

Buster: But… I like magic.

Wayne: Oh boy… here we go.

“Kid, magic acts aren’t cool anym

Buster: Okay… watch this!

Buster fans out the cards, snaps his fingers, and one card floats up like it's alive.

Wayne: Oh geez—

Wayne leans in.

"Kid… how'd you do that?"

Buster: It's my talent show act!

Wayne: Oh boy…

"That's actually… kinda cool."

Buster: You think so?

Wayne: Look, kid… I'm brutally honest.

"But that trick? That trick hits. That's not tired. That's not boring. That's… show material."

Buster: Really?!

Wayne: Yeah, yeah—don't get mushy.

"I'm deciding something. I'm gonna help you pursue this magic thing."

Buster: You mean it?!

Wayne: Geez, kid, don't make me repeat it.

"Magic might actually save your talent show. And maybe my wings."

Buster: So… you liked the trick?

Wayne: Not that. That was terrible.

Wayne waves his wings like he's swatting flies.

"We're turning you into a sarcastic comedian if it kills us."

Buster: But—

Wayne: No buts, kid.

"Magic is cute. Comedy wins. Audiences love sarcasm. They eat it up like cloud candy."

Buster: I don't know how to do sarcasm…

Zen Voice: Whoopsy… I forgot to tell Wayne something.

Zen clears his throat.

“If Buster wins the talent show contest… Wayne gets his wings.”

Wayne: EXCUSE ME—

“You forgot THAT? Zen, that’s not a whoopsy, that’s a whole disaster!”

Zen Voice: I meant to tell you earlier.

“It slipped my mind.”

Wayne: Slipped your mind?

“Zen, that’s the kind of thing you tattoo on your forehead!”

Zen Voice: Well… now you know.

Wayne: Oh boy…

“So if this kid pulls off a magic act, I get wings? Actual wings? Upgraded wings?”

Zen: Angel-bird wings.

Wayne: Great. Fantastic.

“No pressure. Just my entire future depending on a kid who thinks card tricks are cool.”

Wayne: Listen, kid…

He points a wing at Buster like he's laying down the law.

"Magic act is OUT. Stand-up comedy is IN. Capice?"

Buster: But I—

Wayne: No. No magic.

"You're gonna insult people, throw sarcasm, make the audience fall over laughing. That's how you win."

Buster: I don't know how to insult people…

Wayne: Oh boy…

"Then we're starting from zero. You're gonna learn sarcasm even if it knocks us both out."

Buster: How many people you made laugh, huh?

Wayne: Kid… I'm a black belt in insulting.

"Black belt in comebacks. Black belt in laziness. And I know a million jokes."

Wayne: You're a shoe-in to win.

"With me training you? You're basically unstoppable."

Buster: A million jokes?

Wayne: At least.

"I got jokes older than clouds. I got jokes that make angels fall off their chairs."

Buster: Wow…

Wayne: Don't 'wow' me, kid.

"Start paying attention. Comedy class is officially in session."

Buster: Okay… magic act out.

Wayne: Good boy taps his wing like he's sealing a deal.

"I heard the first joke ever told, kid. Trust me — it still gets a laugh."

It's so old…"When you tell it, you hear thunder roaring because the heavens are laughing so hard."

Buster: Really?

Wayne: Kid, . You're a shoe-in to win this thing."

Buster: Wow…

Wayne: Don't 'wow' me.

"Comedy class starts now."

Buster: Alright… let’s do it.

Wayne: That’s a boy.

Wayne gives a proud little wing-tap like he’s knighting him.

“Now— when is this talent show?”

Buster: Friday.

Wayne: FRIDAY?!

Wayne nearly falls over.

“Kid, that’s basically tomorrow in angel time!”

Buster: Is that bad?

Wayne: Bad?

“Kid, we gotta turn you into a sarcastic comedian in, like, two cloud-minutes.”

Buster: I thought we had time…

Wayne: Time?

“Kid, we’re on a countdown. A ticking clock. A comedy emergency.”

Wayne: If you win, I get wings.

“So trust me— we’re training like thunder.”

Wayne: If you win the talent show, I got heaven.

“If you lose, I go hell. Got it?”

Buster: …That’s a lot of pressure.

Wayne: Kid, I’m MADE of pressure!

“I’m basically a stress chicken with wings!”

Zen (calm, angel-voice): Wayne…

“You are not going to hell. Please stop saying that.”

Wayne and Buster work all afternoon long on stand-up comedy.

Wayne: Alright kid, again.

“Magic act OUT. Comedy IN. Capice.”

Buster: I know, I know…

He tries a joke, stumbles over the punchline.

Wayne: Oh boy…

“That joke fell harder than I do off clouds.”

Buster: I’m trying!

Wayne: Try louder!

“Comedy needs confidence. You gotta throw the joke like you’re tossing lightning.”

Buster: Like this?

He tries again, voice cracking.

Wayne: Kid…

“That sounded like a sad duck.”

Buster: So… keep practicing?

Wayne: All afternoon, kid.

“We’re roasting, joking, insulting, and sarcasm-training until the sun gives up.”

Wayne: Now try to insult me, kid.

“And I wanna feel the sarcasm. Hit me. Go.”

Buster: Uh… okay…

He squints, trying to look tough.

“Wayne… you look like a tired pigeon.”

Wayne:

Wayne freezes.

“A… tired pigeon?”

Buster: Yeah!

“Like… one that got lost on the way to the grocery store.”

Wayne: “Kid… that’s actually GOOD.”

Buster: Really?

Wayne: Good?

“That’s a COMEBACK. That’s sarcasm. That’s comedy lightning!”

Buster: I did it?

Wayne: You DID it.

“You roasted me like a cloud chicken. I’m PROUD.”

Buster:“Wayne… you do resemble a tired pigeon sometimes.”

Principal: Buster Brewster from the 4th grade — you're up!

Wayne: Go up there and make me proud.

He gives Buster a wing-tap like a coach sending his champion out.

"Don't worry about my fate — you go out there and knock 'em dead. Got it, kid?"

Buster: You got it.

He walks to the microphone, hands shaking but smiling.

Wayne: That's a boy.

"Make the best stand-up routine ever to come outta your mouth."

Buster: Alright, listen up, you bunch of oversized toddlers.

I'm Buster Brewster, fourth grade, and looking at this crowd…

I'm pretty sure my class goldfish has a higher reading level than half of you.

I skipped my long division homework for this.

LONG DIVISION.

And honestly? I should've stayed home.

I've seen better-looking crowds in the background of a Scooby-Doo chase scene.

Let me tell you how my day goes…

and why YOU PEOPLE stress me out more than math quizzes.

06:30 AM: My alarm goes off.

I actually get out of bed — unlike the dudes in the front row who look like they haven't moved since flip phones were a thing.

07:00 AM: I eat Lucky Charms.

I'm hunting marshmallows.

You all look like you're hunting your last remaining brain cell.

07:30 AM: I pack my backpack.

It weighs 40 pounds because it's full of textbooks — those big paper things you adults use to fix wobbly furniture.

08:15 AM: Recess.

Dodgeballs flying, woodchips everywhere — it's a war zone.

And STILL safer than whatever is happening with the fashion choices in row two.

Sir, did you get dressed in the dark, or do you just hate mirrors?

11:30 AM: Lunchtime.

The cafeteria serves mystery meat.

It looks suspicious…

but still more appetizing than the expressions on your faces right now.

01:45 PM: Social Studies.

We're learning about ancient ruins.

Super convenient — I get a live preview just by looking at this audience.

Buster: And now…

I gotta talk about my "coach."

Wayne.

Wayne told me to "knock 'em dead."

Bro, you can’t even knock yourself awake.

You nap like you’re auditioning to be a mattress.

Wayne says he’s a “black belt in insulting.”

Sir, you’re a black belt in being tired.

You look like a bird who’s been through three divorces and a windstorm.

Wayne flaps his wings like he’s about to fly…

but he never does.

He just stands there looking like a confused chicken who lost his GPS.

He told me he knows “a million jokes.”

Yeah?

Then why do YOU laugh at your own jokes like you’re hearing them for the first time?

Wayne says he’s my comedy coach.

But every time I ask him for advice, he says,

“Kid, I’m on break.”

Wayne, you’re ALWAYS on break.

You take more breaks than Kit-Kat bars.

And he told me,

“If you win, I get heaven. If you lose, I go hell.”

Wayne…

You’re dramatic.

You’d go to hell just for complaining too loud.

Anyway…

If you liked that roast, clap.

If you didn’t…

Wayne trained me, so blame him.

No, Wayne — you’re a black belt in putting people in comas.

Every time you talk, somebody falls asleep.

Wayne is the laziest bird alive.

He’s on Mother Nature’s do-not-call list.

She tried to give him a job once — he didn’t even lift a feather.

And yes, I’m giving Wayne the bird.

He literally is a bird.

A bird brain, actually.

People compare Wayne to Garfield.

But at least Garfield gets up, ships Nermal to Abu Dhabi, and terrorizes the mailman.

What does Wayne do?

I’m amazed he’s still living.

Oh wait — he’s not.

He’s a dead bird knob just sitting there like a fluffy doorstop with a beak.

Don’t get me wrong — I love Wayne.

He’s a great mentor.

But if laziness was a sport?

Wayne wouldn’t even show up to lose.

Good night, everyone!

You’ve been a WONDERFUL audience!

Principal: Ladies and gentlemen…

After reviewing the scores…

After hearing the jokes…

After watching Wayne emotionally collapse backstage…

The winner is…

BUSTER BREWSTER!

Crowd: explodes, screams, cheers, loses their minds

Wayne: I’m honored.

Buster: I did it, Wayne.

Wayne: One more thing, kid.

Buster: Uh-oh.

Wayne: Don’t insult people unless you’re on stage.

Got it?

Promise.

Buster: …Wayne.

You literally trained me to insult people.

Wayne: Yes, but only professionally.

Only when there’s a spotlight.

Only when there’s applause.

Only when I can pretend I didn’t teach you any of it.

Buster: So…

no roasting people at recess?

Wayne: Correct.

Buster: No roasting the principal in the hallway?

Wayne: Absolutely not.

Buster: No roasting YOU at breakfast?

Wayne: Kid, if you roast me before 10 AM, I’ll evaporate.

Buster: Fine.

I promise.

I’ll only insult people on stage.

Wayne: Good boy.

Comedy is an art.

Insults are a craft.

Zen: Time to go, Buster. Say goodbye.

Wayne: Bye, Buster.

Remember what I told you.

Buster: I haven’t forgotten, Wayne.

Zen: I have a confession.

You were never in danger of going to hell.

I made that up to get you to fly right, behave, and get the job done.

You earned your golden bird wings.

Congratulations.

Wayne:

Wayne’s eyes go wide, wings twitching.

You little sneak.

You LIED to me…

for ME?

Awe shucks…

You shouldn’t have.

Zen: You’re welcome, Wayne.

Wayne: I’m honored.

The End